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ABSTRACT

As a result of an expanding school system in Sri Lanka, a demand arose for an increasing number of professional educators. To meet this need, untrained nongraduate persons were recruited into the teaching service. This paper describes the Department of Distance Education (DDE), an organization charged with the planning and implementatiion of initial professional teacher education courses, using the distance mode, to train non-graduate inservice teachers. The DDE's responsibilities are presented in terms of its seven main components: (1) student management--recruits students, tutors, and correspondence teachers, and records and monitors student progress; (2) course development--prepares and revises learning materials; (3) staff development--plans, implements, and follows up on staff development programs; (4) course production--produces and distributes learning materials; (5) study support--supervises and coordinates guidance and counseling and monitors assignments; (6) evaluation and research--prepares follow-up work for final examinations, conducts the practical examinations, evaluates the program, and collects and disseminates distance education literature; and (7) the computer section--computerizes data pertaining to distance education students and personnel, stores and distributes learning materials, evaluates research, and assists in word processing. (LL)

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Teacher Education at a Distance in Sri Lanka

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1.00 Introduction - needs analysis

As a result of the expansion of the school system in Sri Lanka, there arose a demand for the increase of the number in the teaching cadre. To cater to this demand untrained non - gradute teachers were recruited to the teaching service. The traditional teachers colleges could not provide untrained teachers with initial professional training as their annual intake was limited. So the Ministry of Education explored alternative approaches of providing initial training for this backlog of untrained teachers in the system. Advise and help was sought from Liber Hermods of Melmo, Sweden under SIDA aid project. A feasibility study was undertaken by Distance Education Consultants Dr. Rune Flinck and Mrs. Agneta Flinck of Lund University Sweden, in 1981 and suggested that,

> " It is clear that at the moment there is an acute problem in Sri Lanka in that, out of total of 140, 000 teachers in service, about 35, 000 are untrained. This is a result of a very heavy intake of about 27, 000 untrained recruits into the service during the last two years. This large backlog of untrained teachers obviously cannot be cleared through the teachers colleges, nor are we justified in expanding the teachers colleges to cope with such large numbers.
>
> One of the quickest and at the same time most economical ways to meet this need would be the use of distance education. The advantage of this method are, that a great number of trainees could be trained at the same time, still working in the schools and drawing on their practical experience"
>
> (Report on Planning Visit - 1981)

The above proposal was accepted by the Ministry and SIDA and Distance Teacher Education Courses were planned, prepared and implemented from 1984 on - wards.

Beginning from 1984 Department of Distance Education (DDE) implemented Distance Techer Education Courses (DTEC) to teachers in service as initial professional Education Courses. Up to 1992 eight batches of teachers have been admitted to DTE Courses. DDE has during these years provided 10857 trained teachers which means 73% of those enrolled have passed their examination and that out of those sitting for examination as an average 91% passed out. In 1991 and 1992, under the new Teacher Education Areabased (TEA) programme 33175 trainee teachers were recruited to follow DTE Courses.

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2.00 Department of Distance Education

The Distance Education Branch, forerunner to the present Deparment of Distance Education was set up in 1981 within the Teacher Education and Curriculum Division of the Minsitry of Education. With the establishment of the National Institute of Education, the Distance Education Branch developed itself into one of its departments in 1986.

This department is responsible in planning and implementing initial professional Teacher Education Courses to untrained, non - graduate teachers in service, (ie. Teacher Training Certificate Courses) using Distance mode.

The organizational structure of the DDE can be explained in terms of its seven main sub - divisions, or sub - units, namely.

Student Management
Staff Development
Course Development
Course Production
Study Support Section
Evaluation and Research
Computer Section

These seven main sub - units are assigned to the five Chief - Project Officers. The DDE has an academic staff of 52. It is headed by a Director with 05 CPPO, 26 POO and 20 APOO. Every PO and APO is charged with specific duties and functions and each is attached to a particular sub - unit of Department specialisting in a particular field of activity.

There are 250 Distance Education Regional Centres (DERC) established throught the island. The officer in - chaarge of the DERC is the Senior Tutor. To assist him in his work there are 3 -5 full - time DE tutors. For week - end contact sessions part - time tutors are employed. All tutors who work in DERC are trained as DE tutors using the hand books prepared by the DE consultants.

Responsibilities of each section are as follows:

(a) STUDENT MANAGEMENT SECTION

- Recruitment of students
- Establish centres / recruitment of Tutors and Correspondance teachers
- Recording and monitoring of module study progress of students

(c) COURSE DEVELOPMENT SECTION

- Preparation of learning material
- Revision of learning material

(b) STAFF DEVELOPMENT SECTION

- Planning for staff development
- Implementation of staff development
- Follow up the staff development programmes.

(d) COURSE PRODUCTION SECTION

- Production of learning material
- Maintaining of stores
- Distribution of learning material

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(e) STUDY SUPPORT SECTION

- Educational Management of regional centres
- Supervising and coordinating guidance and counselling
- Monitoring of assignments for submission

(f) EVALUATION AND RESEARCH SECTION

- Preparational and follow - up work for the final examination
- Conducting the practical examination
- Continuous evaluation of the programme
- Collecting and dissemination of research in distance Education

(g) COMPUTER SECTION

- Computerize data pertaining to DE students
- Computerize data pertaining to DE personnel
- Computerize data pertaining to production, storage distribution of learning material
- Computerize data pertaining to eveluation and research
- Assist all sections in word processing

3.00 Aims and Objectives

The aim of designing Distance Teacher Education Courses is to bring about professional development of teachers serving in the Ministry of Education.

It is expected that the teacher trainees by following these teacher education courses would achieve development in cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes) and psycho - motor (skills) domains in education.

The objectives expected are as follows:

- developing of knowledge in teaching subject areas relevant to the school curriculum in Sri Lanka.
- acquisition of knowledge on current learning theories and how they can be utilized in teaching.
- awareness of the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of children.
- gain knowledge and skills in choosing, developing and utilizing the learning material appropriately.
- development of knowledge and skills in maintaining good inter - personal relationship with the school community.
- gain skills in choosing and adopting the appropriate techniques of teaching when planning learning situations.
- acquire knowledge and skills in using strategies to maintain friendly relationship with the community for the progress of the community through the school and for the progress of the school through the coummunity.
- focussing attitudes in maintaining the honour and dignity of the teaching profession.
- drawing up a systematic teaching - learning process in keeping with the versatile needs of the pupils.
- gain a proper knowledge of the role of the teacher according to the needs of a National System of Education, and development of suitable skills and morals.
- gain skills in planning and implementing evaluation methods and tests to evaluate the student's progress in learning.
- developing of skills, in maintaining successful classroom management by organizing a pleasent and stimulating environment which would motivate pupils to learn.

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4.0 Courses of study

Beginning from 1984, two Distance Teacher Education Courses were conducted by the Department .

There are,

(a) Elementary Teacher Education Course for teachers of primary grades (ie. year 1 - 6)

(b) Mathematics and Science combined Teacher Education Course for teachers of secondary grades. (ie. year 6 - 11)

From 1990 onwards the Maths and Science combined course was seperated to form two courses of study, namely,

(a) Mathematics Teacher Education Course for Teachers of secondary grades. (ie. year 6 -11)

(b) Science Teacher Education Course for teachers of secondary grades. (ie. year 6 - 11)

In 1989 basing a NIE Council decision DDE planned and implemented a General English Course for non - English teachers in service called, English Language Improvement Programme for Non - English teachers (ELIPNET) as a pilot project in the Kalutara Education Region.

In 1991, after recruiting the 32,000 trainee teachers, a new programme called Teacher Education Area Based (TEA) was launched. For these trainees the following new courses have been developed.

(a) Sinhala Language Teacher Education Course
(b) Tamil Language TEC
(c) Religion TEC (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christinity)
(d) History and Social Studies TEC
(e) Commerce TEC
(f) Home Economics TEC
(g) Agriculture TEC
(h) Aesthetics TEC (Art, Music, Dancing)
(i) English Language TEC
(j) Physical Education & Sports TEC
(k) Technical Skills TEC

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DDE Launched its courses of study in 1984, and in all eight batches have been admitted. The following table illustrates the success of the programme.

Table 1 Enrolements and Examinations (1984 - 1992)

Batch	Enrolled	Sat for Exam	Passed	Passed/ Enrolled	Passed/ Sat for Exam
1984	4666	3989	3828	82%	96%
1985	4295	3582	3311	77%	92%
1987	3216	2534	2290	71%	91%
1988	2324	1641	1428	62%	87%
1989	1614	1243	-	-	-
1990	2937	-	-	-	-
1991	32461	-	-	-	-
1992	3092	-	-	-	-

DDE had during these years provided 10857 trained teachers which means that 75% of those enrolled have passed their examination and that out of those sitting for examination as an average 91% passed out.

The above table shows that in 1991 enrolement of student teachers in DE courses increased tremendously. The reason for this was the enrolement of trainee - teachers appointed to schools in and after 1989. Out of a total of 32461 enroled in 1991, 31075 belong to the above mentioned category of trainee teachers.

As at present there are in all 38490 student teachers following the DE courses.

6.00 Course Content

In general a Distance Teacher Education Course has three components :

(i) Professional Education
(ii) General Education
(iii) Academic Education

The Professional Education component contains Educational Psychology, Principles of Education and Educational practice. Under the General Education component the teacher is given a knowledge of his / her Mother Tongue, Religion, Health and Physical Education and Aesthetic Education, with the hope of developing a strong personality needed for the teaching profession. Under the academic component the teacher will receive further learning on the subject area that he / she is going to teach in the school. This component is organized to cover almost all the subject areas in the school curriculum.

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7.00 Learning System and Study Support

The Distance Teacher Education Learning System consists of:

(a) Pre - prepared, printed self - learning materials in modular form (Comprehensive type)
(b) Assignments for submission.
(c) Face - to face contact sessions in Regional Centres.
Three type - Study Circles
Practical Session
5 Day Vacation Session.
(d) School based support or school visits by tutors.

Above activities are carried out in 250, regional centres throughout the island.

A Distance Teacher Education Course has to be followed mainly through the study of Modules, supplemented by other study support activities.

Module is a pre - prepared, self - contained, printed, self - learning material. Each Module contains a single unit of a particular subject. It is not merely the subject matter that is contained in a Module. It contains a learning process too. It provides the student with clear guidelines for his / her work, and information on how he / she can cope with his / her studies.

In the Distance Education system, the Module acts as the teacher. It is a designed teacher. In preparing a Module, an attempt has been made to include all the good characteristics of a teacher and to exclude all the bad characteristics.

Each module contains an assigment for submission. It contains questions, exercises or projects, covering the main content of the module, for the student to work out. It is submitted to the correspondence teacher to be corrected, evaluated and commented on, and is returned to the student. It makes provisions for exercise, transfer of learning, two - way communication between correspondence teacher and student, evaluation and feedback.

For the trainees who do their studies alone with the printed material, a series of study support activities are being carried out which would help them to get their study problems solved, to counteract the feeling of isolation that may be experienced by distant students, and to get involved in group work and discussions.

There are three types of contact sessions organised by the Regional Centres under the supervision of the Department of Distance Education. They are :

(1) Study Circles
(2) Practical Sessions
(3) Five - day Contact Sessions (during school vacations.)

Study Circles

It is a one day contact session. Within six working hours a flexible programme is carried out at this session according to the needs of the students. In general, the students will get the opportunity to discuss and solve their study problems that may arise in module study and also to discuss problems that may arise through marked assignments.

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Practical Sessions

Practical sessions would help the trainees for the development of their skills with the assistance and guidance of the tutors, which they may not be able to develop merely through module studies. They are two day sessions, and there will be 3 such sessions in an academic year. Attendance in these sessions is compulsary. Special attention is given to practiacal work in subjects like Science, Physical Education and Aesthetic Education, at these sessions.

Five - day Contact Sessions

These contact sessions are being arranged to incorporate different activities which would help the trainees in there personality development. These sessions with a duration of five continuous days are held during school vacations. Accordingly, there will be 3 such sessions within a year. At these sessions the trainees will get the opportunity for the development of teaching skills, development of interpersonal relationships, socialization, development of special abilities and exhibiting them.

8.00 Development of learning Materials

The basis of Distance study is the pre - produced learning materials which are usually printed. In the Distance Teacher Education Courses in Sri Lanka the printed lesson units or modules are planned and prepared by a team of teacher educators.

The process of course development consists of two phases. These are

(a) Academic Preparation.
(b) Technical Production.

During the academic prepartion course team in each subject area plans the writing of course units and also coordinates the writing of lesson units by the course writers. The draft lesson units are discussed by the course team and revised until the final draft is prepared. Then the team moderates the self learning lesson unit and submitted for language editing.

During the technical production phase the lesson unit is given for type setting. The page layout is done incorporating all illustrations. When the page design work is completed the prepared final art work is sent to the printer with specific instructions for printing.

During course development activities, course coordinators and course writers perform a major role in preparing a full comprehensive self learning lesson unit. The team approach for course writing evolved here has been successful and the Department was able to develop all the professional Teacher Education Courses needed for primary and secondary school teachers in Sri Lanka.

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9.00 Programme Evaluation

So far as evaluation of the Distance Teacher Education programme in Sri Lanka two reports are published.
These are :-

(a) Training Teachers through Distance Education . an evaluation of a Sri Lanka Programme. July 1988 By Alan W. Dock, Wendy A Duncan, Elsie M. Kotalawala a SIDA Report.

(b) The cost - effectiveness of Dis tance Education for Teacher Training. April 1991
By H. Dean Nielsen, Maria Teresa Tatto, Aria Djalil and N. Kularatne
a BRIDGES Report.

The following excerpts from the two studies illustrate the success of the programme.

" On the basis of this evaluation three broad conclusions can be made with regard to the distance education teacher training programme.

1. The distance programme is functioning well and is achieving its main objective, the distance training of non - graduate teachers.

Neverthless, the feeling of the evaluation team was that the distance programme has some impact upon teaching practices. Although the distance - trained teachers still tend to teach mainly through ' chalk and talk' methods, some improvements were apparent. The distance - trained teachers used teaching aids more than is usual, and had gained in subject knowledge. They were also said to be more interested in their work than untrained teachers, and had greater understanding of the Social and Psychological aspects of teaching.

Through the distance programme, teachers have been sensitised to innovative teaching methods. However, they are hampered at present from introducing these methods by the lack of resources in schools, the large class sizes, and prevailing attitudes. If these factors change, the distance - trained teachers will be in a better position to utilise the knowledge gained in the distance course.

2. Distance Education has become established among Sri Lankan teachers and educators as an acceptable mode of delivery for teacher training.

The distance education programme has official recognition as a teacher training qualification, equal in status to that carried out in teacher training colleges. Successful completion of either of the distance courses is followed by automatic promotion to the position of trained teacher.

3. "Given the current levels of recruitment of untrained, non - graduate teachers, there will be a market for the current distance education courses into the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, the DDE will eventually have to look for new avenues in which to expand its activities. The infrastructure established

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by the DDE is a valuable resource which could be utilised in the future to deliver many different short - and long - term courses developed either by DDE or other institutes. One such possibility is that the distance programme link up with the SIDA - funded plantation School Education Project. And develop a training programme for the untrained teachers in plantation schools. Our general view is that the DDE should see itself in the long - term as a delivery system servicing the course needs of other institutes within NIE and the Ministry."

(DOCK - DUNCAN - KOTALAWALA. 1988)

" In the case of Distance Education. It is apparent that the program' s particular mode of integrating study with ongoing work in teaching has borne fruit. Increased knowledge may be explained by the constant interaction with and feedback from tutors, whereas the effectiveness in skills acquisition may be a reflection of the group work (practical sessions and the exchange of experience and know how) and the feedback provided by tutors during school visits. The fact that the DE program was more effective in improving both knowledge and teaching skills in language as compared to Maths is not surprising given the fact that much DE learning is still self - instructional. Throughout the world self - instructional programs are more effective in teaching verbal skills than they are quantitative skills. The positive effect of the DE program on professional attitudes may be more a reflection of the proptessional suport from peers and tutors and an increase in competence and job satisfaction. than it is the result of explicit teaching and learning of appropriate attitudes. This point is buttressed by the findings of a follow -up study that once the course was finished and the graduates were back on their own again. attitude levels were found to be basically on a par with those of the entry - level group."

(BRIDGES - REPORT - 1991)

10.00 Conclusion

The Professional Education of Teachers Programme has been receiving funding from SIDA. Foreign consultancy was given basing the following 04 principles.

(i) the responsibility for all activities should rest upon the local authority.

(ii) show openness and flexibility in relation to the specific nature of the country and its people.

(iii) it is impossible to introduce in a new country a ready -made dis tance education system already established elsewhere.

(iv) consultants are responsible for the training of the local staff.

It has been a splendid coopertaion with successful achievements. The Consultants were able to transfer know how in order to prepare the staff to develop the technique of distance education and minimised the dependance on foreign expertise. So it is a Sri Lankan venture functioning well and achieving its objectives of providing initial professional education to teachers in the school system in Sri Lanka.

Basing the urgent needs of the Education System DDE has identified 03 activities for implementation during the coming years .These are :

(a) Opening up DTE Courses
(b) Study Guides for secondary school children.
(c) BEd Degrees for trained teachers in service.

The recruitment of non - graduate untrained teachers for the school system in Sri Lanka has been a perennial issue. To avoid recruitment of non - graduate untrained teachers for the school system, systematic planning for pre - service professional teacher education courses are urgently needed. As an initial activity DDE propose to open up the DTE Courses for non - teachers specially in disadvantaged areas, as a pilot project. The Learning Materials (Modules) already prepared by DDE can be used for these courses and Distance Education Regional Centre (DERC) net work already established can be utilized for face - to face sessions.

The provision of an uninterrupted education up to at least G. C. E (O / L) or Year 11 is a basic need in the Sri Lanka context. But there exists and the educationists have high lighted intra and inter Regional imbalances in the provision of educational facilities and deployment of teachers in Sri Lanka. With the objective of alleviating these inter and intra regional imbalances and disparities in the provision of education DDE is proposing to develop and provide for school children of years 9, 10 and 11 with Study - Guides in three major subjects of the curriculum. It is intended to carry this out on a ' pilot basis' in some selected education divisions only. It is also proposed that during and after the implementation of the pilot project evaluation scheme should be carried out.

The out - reach of quality education to all segments of the population depends on the availability of professionally qualified teachers in the school system. It is apparent

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that in the teaching profession the number of graduate teachers are low and there are outstanding disparities in the deployment of these graduate teachers among regions. As a major step towards the professional development of the teaching cadre DDE is proposing to develop an education oriented BEd degree course for all trained teachers in service.

Development of the DDE and its network of 250 Regional Centers throughout have provied the country an infrastructure in the sphere of Teacher Education. Trained professional or Teacher Educators are engaged as tutors in DE system. DE Regional Centres can be looked up as Teachers' Resource Centers for professional development of teachers as well as Teacher Educators. DDE has also developed a team of course writers mastered in the techniques of preparing self - learning materials in the form of modules. These human and physical resources have unique potential in the sphere of teacher education in the future. Presently teacher education is highlighted and conceived as an integrated continuous process with life long prospects. It is the use of Distance Mode that is identified as a major activity in the professional Education of teachers in Sri Lanka

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